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ABSTRACT

Princeton City School District Staff and parents created a plan for monitoring student achievement. Each group--teachers, counselors, coaches and club sponsors, parents, students, and administrators--was given responsibilities; parents, for example, were asked to emphasize learning's importance in the home. Biweekly computer printouts note students' areas of study and student problems to help staff outside the classroom assist students with difficulties inside. The junior high plan focuses upon student/teacher teams and involves a computer listing of students checked by teachers and passed to "resource" persons. At intervals parents are informed of students' problems and prgress. The high school plan revolves around biweekly and interim progress reports containing teachers' assessments for parents and counselors; students rated deficient are to be counseled by several staff members. That the young program is successful is shown in students' heightened level of academic concern and counselors' use of the biweekly reports to help students before it is too late. (KS)

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PRINCETON'S FORMULA FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Educators and parents know the tremendous influence coaches, activity sponsors, specific teachers, and counselors have on certain children. Recognizing this concept, Richard Denoyer, superintendent of the Princeton City School District, brought a group of teachers, counselors, administrators, coaches, and parents together to prepare a plan for the monitoring of student achievement. This plan would involve all members of the school staff and parents that would help students to improve achievement.

The result of this group's work was the development of the "Princeton Formula for Academic Excellence." Specific responsibilities were outlined for each sector of individuals involved in the daily lives of Princeton students.

Responsibilities

For this plan to work, teachers were assigned the responsibilities of:

- having a syllabus (course description) for students and parents. Materials to be covered, expectations, goals, discipline, and evaluation procedures were to be included.
- filling out a prepared form every other week on students who are failing, working below expectations, having attitude problems, attendance problems, tardiness, etc.
- talking to students who are having problems academically or socially.
- contacting parents when a need arises.
- contacting the counselor to check for pertinent information.
- being available to help students before or after school.

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Counselors are responsible for:

- reviewing bi-weekly reports.
- counseling with all students whose names appear on the composite reports.
- counseling with students who are failing or working below expectations and whose names appear on interim reports.
- reporting to grade level administrators in writing the outcome of each conference.
- making phone calls when necessary to parents.

Coaches, sponsors of clubs, and directors of performing arts are responsible for:

- encouraging and inviting parents to "Back to School Night."
- inviting parents to a meeting (cookout) before the first activity to give a talk on excellence in academics and the discipline required for activities and academics.
- meeting with students when bi-weekly reports are received to motivate academic improvement.
- providing help for students after school in terms of counseling, having a student talk with the teacher, allowing no activity practice time for that student, and holding a study help "round table."
- setting up a peer group to help and encourage other students.
- reporting in writing to the athletic director, activities director and/or music coordinator the help that each student is receiving.

Parents are responsible for:

- attending meetings that have a bearing on the welfare of the student.
- familiarizing themselves with what is expected of students in all areas.
- finding out what is required from the student's teacher in terms of homework, goals, expectations, evaluations, discipline, etc.

- calling the school when questions or concerns arise.
- bringing other parents to team meetings.
- bringing other parents to open house and other school functions.
- emphasizing in the home that learning is important.

Students are responsible for:

- having good attendance.
- being prepared at all times.
- being well rested.
- learning how to manage time.
- having a positive attitude toward learning.
- maintaining a desire to excel.
- asking teachers for help when needs arise.
- seeing the counselor when needing help.

Administrators are responsible for:

- writing letters to parents to invite them to visit on Parent's Night.
- making sure that all teachers have prepared forms listing students' names.
- collecting forms at a scheduled time.
- designating a person to input information in computer.
- distributing composite reports or listings to the appropriate people.
- supervising the reporting-and-contacting-of-students procedure.
- supporting all persons involved in the project.

Formula Procedures

Rosters of students' names in clubs, in activities, and on athletic teams are available in the district's computer. Two printouts are prepared; one, an alphabetical listing by grade for the grade level principals and counselors, and a

second one, a composite for each activitity.

The printouts are provided on a bi-weekly basis to administrators, counselors, coaches, and other individuals in charge of extracurricular activities. The listings indicate to the appropriate person the students, the areas of study, and the problems the students are having. This information helps staff members outside the classroom to offer encouragement and provide assistance to those students having difficulties within the classroom. These extracurricular staff members work cooperatively with the classroom teachers to improve the students' academic achievement and social behavior.

The Plan at Princeton Junior High School

Princeton Junior High School is organized around student-teacher teams of approximately 125 students. Each academic team, consisting of five techers, has a common team-planning period. Working together, the teachers and building administrators developed a computer printout plan to list all students assigned to a team. Teachers meet on their team-planning period and complete the information needed in their subject areas. The following categories are checked for each student, if applicable:

- failing
- danger of failing
- working below expectancy

In addition, a comment column must be checked stating possible reasons for the category checked. Comments to be checked include:

- unprepared
- incomplete assignments
- uncooperative
- rules violations

- nonparticipating
- attendance

A composite list of all students checked as failing, in danger of failing, or working below expectancy is given to each administrator. Assorted lists, by activity, are given to the respective coaches, sponsors, or special teachers. These "resource" persons offer assistance and encouragement in any manner they deem necessary. Many times this assistance may come in the form of encouraging words to students. There may be times when the coach or sponsor may restrict participation until improvement is made in the academic area. If a student is not involved in an activity, the counselors are responsible for the contact with that student.

Another very important part of the monitoring program is the reporting to parents. Individual copies of the information printed on the composite list are available and used as a means of informing parents, counselor, and the team leader of a student's academic progress. Multiple copies of this report-card-size form are printed at the end of the second week of the quarter and again at the end of the seventh week of the quarter. Two copies are sent home with the student, and one copy must be signed by the parent and returned to the homeroom teacher. The counselor and team leader each retain a copy of this report. In addition, an Interim Progress Report is sent home at the end of the fifth week of the quarter on all students showing the student's progress at the midpoint of the quarter.

The Plan at Princeton High School

The Teaming for Academic Excellence at Princeton High School is designed to provide personalized academic monitoring of over 1,800 students. The two basic components are the Bi-Weekly Reports and the Interim Progress Reports.

Bi-Weekly Reports

On a bi-weekly basis, all teachers submit a report to grade level offices

listing the names of students whose performance during that period has been deficient. Three categories are available for designation: failing, borderline, and working below expectations. The form also includes six comment codes which list causes for the poor performance. These include: unprepared, incomplete assignments, uncooperative, violation of classroom rules, lack of participation, and attendance. Any number of these comment codes can be checked by the teacher and will appear on the printout.

After completion of the data via the district computer, the following groups of individuals are given copies:

- administrators
- counselors
- athletic coaches
- activity advisors
- homeroom teachers
- teacher advisors (included in this group are teachers who have, for whatever reason, indicated a desire to monitor the academic performance of selected students.)

After the reports are distributed, the staff mobilizes to focus on students whose names appear on the list. In most cases, each student will be counseled by several adults as related to academic performance. Evidence has shown that the students generally respond positively when the efforts of their classroom teachers are supported by other adults with whom they have contact.

The faculty members who counsel with students appearing on the bi-weekly reports make a written record of these contacts and submit these written records to supervisors at the end of each two-week period.

Interim Progress Reports

During the fourth week of each quarterly grading period, all teachers write

Interim Progress Reports for students assigned to their classes. This report is given to students during the homeroom period. These personalized forms are produced in triplicate on pressure-sensitive paper. The reports contain identifying data and the classroom schedule of each student. As students report to each of their classes during the day, teachers collect the forms and complete them during the class period.

The most important component of the Interim Progress Report is the teachers' written assessment of the student's progress. This includes the approximate grade. Also, the teacher includes information that is routine for the Bi-Weekly Report. At the end of the day after students have reported to all classes, the Interim Progress Reports are collected. Two copies are returned to the student to be taken home. One of these copies is to be signed by the parent and returned the next day. The other is to be kept by the parent. The third copy of the form is given to the student's counselor.

Evaluation

Since it's inception, the monitoring of academic excellence has been a source of heightened academic awareness for secondary students throughout the Princeton City School District. The program has contributed to ongoing efforts of establishing and maintaining an academic environment. Although the body of statistical data is not yet large enough to form definite conclusions, the following observations attest to the program's early success:

- Parents have praised the program.
- The Bi-Weekly Reports have become a basis for the majority of academic counseling sessions. The counselors are able to use their skills and intervene with students experiencing difficulty in the classroom before

it is too late for help. The program causes teachers to make formal assessments of a student's progress more frequently than in the past. This type of feedback benefits students and teachers.

- Administrators are now using current academic information as they deal with students relative to discipline, attendance, and other types of problems. In many cases, this allows administrators to validate a correlation between academic problems and behavioral problems.
- Staff members working with the students in extracurricular and co-curricular areas are now a part of the formal academic support team. Because of their unique relationship with students, they are often able to facilitate improvement by approaching the students from a different viewpoint than that of the classroom teacher.
- Students are talking about academic performance more than before this program began. This interaction evidences the increased academic awareness. This heightened level of concern related to academics enhances the school climate.
- Although there were initial concerns from some staff members relative to the increased paperwork, they now believe that the effort is more than worthwhile. Classroom teachers appear to appreciate the support of other staff members in this organized manner.

Students, teachers, parents, and school administrators believe that the Princeton Formula for Academic Excellence is working, and working well for Princeton students. Since all involved are working toward a common goal, that of academic excellence, all those involved will be working toward future improvements in the program. The program will continue to be monitored closely and any necessary modifications can be easily accomplished.